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Students' Passion Projects earn Hawke's Bay teacher a national award

A Hawke's Bay teacher who encourages her students to find their passion will receive an ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (ASG NEiTA) on February 23 at an official ceremony hosted by Hon Chris Hipkins MP, Minister of Education in Wellington.

Deputy Principal, Karen Barkle from Ongaonga School in Hawkes Bay will join five other outstanding educators from across New Zealand in receiving the top awards.

Selected from around 200 nominations in 2017, the six national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching. Now in its 21st year, the ASG NEiTA awards have contributed more than \$1 million in professional development grants to outstanding teachers in Australia and New Zealand.

Karen is an advocate of 'student agency'; self-directed learning by students, giving them the freedom to make choices about subjects and contexts, and the direction they want to take. "The teacher's role is to facilitate and help guide students manage their own learning process," she says.

"This has been very successful and many students who found learning difficult suddenly were engaged, enthusiastic and proud of their achievements. One of my students created lessons plans for basketball drills and taught the class and myself new skills.

"Self-directed learning is becoming embedded in our school and students' ability to manage themselves, has meant some great successes across the curriculum. Staff have undertaken further professional development, integrating student agency and growth mindset to weave through the self-directed learning process".

Karen has also been recognised for her leadership role in IT. She has been instrumental in up-skilling staff and students to ensure they keep up with digital technologies.

As part of self-directed learning, Karen introduced students and teachers to One Note and One Drive to track progress and engagement, to ensure students were making the best choices for their learning.

Karen says she'd like to do further study in digital technology, using her ASG NEiTA grant.

"Digital Technology is an area being developed in the NZ Curriculum, and I would like to be at the forefront of implementation. Digital fluency, computational thinking and the ability to integrate digital technology across the curriculum is the future of learning. I would like to be on the journey helping my students along the way."

The national recipients are selected by a panel of four judges comprising President NZ Schools Trustees Association, Lorraine Kerr (MNZM); John Paul College Principal, Patrick Walsh; Head of Department English, Social Sciences and Languages for Toi-Ohomai Institute of Technology, Joanne Hayes; former Vice-President Secondary Principals' Association of NZ (SPANZ), John Day and NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt.

The selection process is rigorous, including a comprehensive nomination outline, a written paper and video presentation by the nominated teacher.

Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout New Zealand nominated the six deserving and inspirational recipients.

ASG NEiTA Chairman Allen Blewitt says the national recipients have made their mark in local communities throughout New Zealand.

"It's so wonderful to see teachers being singled out by members of the community for their personal contribution to education. It's in local townships, farming villages and indeed larger city centres where our ASG NEiTA recipients can be the heartbeat of these communities. For every student they teach, teachers could be impacting multiple lives as they establish relationships with parents, grandparents, and connect the home and school life, creating an eco-system of continued and shared learning and support networks.

"The thread that ties our six ASG NEiTA recipients and brings communities together are their common values and educational aspirations. Motivating students to push themselves, creating inclusive spaces, identifying specific developmental and communication needs, and letting them take charge of their learning, are the key drivers behind teaching strategies and innovative approaches happening every day in schools. I thank our ASG NEiTA recipients for their passion and persistence in teaching today's young people and for the communities who nominated them, in recognising their outstanding and inspirational qualities."

ASG CEO Tim Mitchell-Adams says the ASG NEiTA recipients are passing on one of the most valuable gifts a young person can receive.

"I congratulate all the ASG NEiTA recipients for their significant and personal contribution in achieving better education outcomes for New Zealand school children. Teachers have an enormous responsibility and right from early childhood education, our ASG NEiTA recipients are putting the building blocks together so that young people are equipped to become confident and competent lifelong learners.

"As students navigate their educational and life journey, our ASG NEiTA recipients are going on a journey of their own. A journey of excitement and wonder as they see their students achieve, through taking risks, accepting challenges and breaking down barriers. Some of these teachers have seen students blossom on the world stage and have careers they love. Our ASG NEiTA recipients are a huge part of these success stories, encouraging, mentoring and leading students to map out their future and reach their full potential, regardless of what that looks like. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 21 years. The community thanks and applauds you for the countless hours and dedication you put into teaching their children."

The six national recipients will each receive \$5000 professional development grants. For more information and to view their ASG NEiTA profiles go to: www.asg.co.nz/neita

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Editor's notes:

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 540,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.5 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members.

The ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) started in 1994 in Australia and 1996 in New Zealand. Since inception, more than 35,500 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1000 teachers receiving \$1,000,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

For more information visit: www.asg.co.nz